

Sound

In the Footsteps of the Chalutzim



Ichud Habonim

Spring 1981

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INTRODUCTION

There are many ways of looking at Israel. The archaeologist is inspired by what lies buried in the earth, and the sociologist by what has been created on that same earth.

The geographer has maps to guide him, but what do we, the would-be imitators of the pioneers of Israel, have to guide us?

This booklet is a collection of sources related to the Second Aliyah (1904-1914), and the tremendous contribution made by those chaverim, together with those of the Third Aliyah (1919-1920) to the development of Eretz Yisrael and the foundation of the state.

We hope that in these sources we may find some hints about the idealism and the fierce motivation of those chalutzim despite the hard conditions prevailing. What made them choose Eretz-Yisrael whereas most of our grandparents chose Western Europe or America? How did they survive, and what did they leave us as a legacy?

This booklet has been prepared to accompany a tour in the footsteps of the Second Aliyah in the "cradle" of the settlement movement, the area of the Kinneret. For those chaverim who cannot physically participate in this tour, we suggest that the written sources are interesting enough on their own to warrant reading and discussion.

Spring 1981

Ilan Israel
Machleket Chinuch

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The inspiration for this project can be traced to Muki Tzur (Kibbutz Ein Gev), who is helping a new generation in the kibbutz movement and the youth movements to understand the sources.

Our thanks are also due to the following chaverim: Dodi Goldman (Kibbutz Rosh Hanikera), who has led this tour for Habonim and who helped select the sources for this booklet; Rafi Goldman (Kibbutz Urim), who translated most of the material; Shula Derechinsky (Kibbutz Gezer) for help in preparation, and Peter Rogel (also from Gezer) for his graphic contribution.

Bitania Ilit in the afternoon. The sun shines from behind us, preparing for sunset. The green valley and blue Kinneret are spread in front of us, and it is hard to tell if this is a true vision or a multi-cloured dream.

In the colourful idyll of the Jordan Valley there is something magical, yet deceptive. Whoever looks closely at the picture of the valley at the turn of the century can see how misleading the idyllic image is; this valley can also be a desert, with a lake as its heart. The River Jordan, that is now hidden by lush greenery, was then seen in all its winding turns, and its water did not fill a valley of palms and eucalyptus trees, houses, fish-ponds and banana plantations. It was a wilderness with a pitiful number of mud-huts and bedouintents, the khan on top of the hill and the tiny railway station on the other side of the Jordan. A small German motor-boat ferried passengers from Tiberias to the railway station at Zemach, and occasionally processions of camels crossed the river. People crossed the river by foot or by donkey. There was no bridge in those days.

Today, every summer sees long processions of automobiles filled with children and babies burst through to the Kinneret. They do not accept the verdict of the well-known weather expert, who stated more than 60 years ago that the people of Degania are crazy because they dare raise children in the Jordan Valley. No one questioned his authority, yet the founders of the Jordan Valley settlements did not accept the famous saying that "everyone talks about the weather and nobody does anything about it." Every summer they sent their children for "a change of air", but meanwhile, they planted trees, laid pipes, worked a piece of land and then another piece. The accepted remedy then, the "change of air", was a necessity in a valley which reverted every summer to its desert character: the trees were not yet spreading their shade, the water was far away, the basalt rocks radiated a burning heat. Over the years, the trees grew, the lawns spread, the valley became covered with a carpet of orchards

and sprinklers, and suddenly masses of children and adults began to spend their summer by the shores of the Kinneret.

Whoever looks closely at the multi-coloured idyll of the Jordan Valley today has to remember that in fact it is no idyll - but drama. Whoever looks down on the valley from above sees well-established settlements, dotted with greenery and shade, white concrete houses, sometimes with red roofs, wonderful avenues of trees, something stable, and solid. But this valley hides many experiments that failed. Um Juni, Chavat Kinneret, the group of naturalists on the hill by Kinneret, lower and upper Bitania - all of these settlements that were abandoned or removed from their origins. Hundreds of people passed through this valley and could not stay here - many fled from it, many died before their time, and many were defeated by natural and human pressures.

Alterman called the Kinneret "the tear on the cheek of the world", and in this phrase I find a true description of the drama that unfolded here, in which Degania has a central role.

The sparkling Degania became the fermenting element of the rapidly developing valley. Degania itself passed through great crises, changes and revolutions, but for the settler in the valley, as to all the workers in Eretz Yisrael, Degania became the symbol of the hope for rootedness, for permanence.

The originality of working the land was an experience for the brave, but Degania and Kinneret, the first kvutzot in the valley, saw as a no less daring adventure their attempt to be a new human endeavour. Not merely an act of settlement but a will to renew the society. They believed that by returning the Jew to the land, rebelling against their parents, coming to a new country, they were opening new hopes for and expectations from man. Nothing is taken for granted, nothing fixed in advance. The man who chooses to change his fate must be receptive and aware of the changes that are possible in the individual and in the society.

In the way of life of the people of the Second Aliyah, in Degania and in "Hashomer" (the self-defence movement), in the small communes in town and village, in manual labour, the same sense of awe, doubt and belief was revealed that is born in the hours of creation.

One of the old-timers described this situation by saying: "We had the heart of the dove but the wings of the eagle." The heights that were reached in the human endeavours at the beginning of Degania sprung from that dove-like heart that refused to reconcile itself with the smooth, empty phrases, that clip the wings and encase the heart in their pretense to understand man, his "nature" and his "instincts."

Now that Degania has reached its 70th year, I decided to linger slightly over the date. Is it really 70 years old? How do we determine the date of the birth of a place? Is it from the day it is settled on the land? Or on the day the group forms itself to search for a place of settlement? Or on the day their members arrived in the country? Or on the day on which the way of life of the settlement was formulated? Is 70 years the correct date? It is difficult to know, as a settlement is not one human being, whose date of birth is known to all.

The settlement of Um Juni occurred in stages. 72 years ago, a group of three left Chavat Kinneret (the farm) to plough furrows in the land of Um Juni during the week, and returned to the farm at Kinneret for Shabbat.

The first group that lived at Um Juni was a group of workers who arrived there 71 years ago. This was the "group for settling the land", who came to live at Um Juni and do the preliminary agricultural work, without any intention of staying in the area.

The settlement of Degania in its present location began 68 years ago when the first houses were built, and Um Juni was abandoned for the new settlement.

74 years ago, the nucleus of the first group of Degania, the commune from Romny, arrived in the Land of Israel. They lived as a commune in Petach Tikva, the farm at Kinneret, and Hadera, absorbing new members along the way, creating a group and learning how to work.

What in fact happened 70 years ago? This group came to "inherit" Um Juni from the "group of settlement", which had broken up.

The nucleus of this group persevered through the years, and

carried Degania through all the changes that occurred. The fixing of this date as the start of Degania is a true expression of Degania. Degania wanted to be a home, a place of settlement and a commune - a collective society working the land.

Did Degania happen by chance?

Was it chance that gave birth to Degania - or perhaps a philosophy of life? This question has intrigued many people. Was there a plan? Is the development over the years a deviation from the plan, or a process of creative development?

This question has been asked of the members of Degania all along, and not by accident.

The researchers who want to, can "prove" either theory. The lands of Degania and Kinneret, which were the most important laboratory for the Second Aliyah, were by chance the property of the World Zionist Organisation. On other lands, such social experiments could hardly have taken place. Without the support of men like Levontin and Ruppin for the effort of settling the land, and the opportune political moments, the chance for the experiment might not have arisen.

Yet there is another facet to examining whether Degania was established through chance, or according to a plan. The "settlement group" went to Um Juni after a strike of the workers in the farmyard of Kinneret. The fierce argument between the workers and their supervisor led to a compromise which was the separation of the lands of Um Juni (Degania) from Daleika (Kinneret). These lands were separated by the river Jordan. Can we say that without this argument between the supervisor and the workers, that the kibbutz would never have been created? This position seems superficial to me, especially as at the same time, many others were already searching for a way to achieve something similar. There were parties and groups abroad that spoke about collective settlement in the Land of Israel. There were already communes in the country, and a number of other experiments which were leading to communal life. Even among the group that later put the idea into practice, there was talk of the possibility before the strike. At that time, when they were examining the possibility of sending a group of tenant-farmers to Um Juni on a collective basis, there was panic at the

daring of the idea. They were reticent about over-daring projects, that had been attempted and had failed in the past. The timing, the push from the outside, were answered by a brave internal feeling, a longing for something as yet undefined, and unformulated. Despite the lack of institutions and collective structure, the will to live differently was exposed - the need to give expression to every worker out of collective responsibility, to burst through the framework of the existing reality and to create a real way of life. There was a lack of contentment with the idea alone, and a readiness to test it in reality.

The fact that many of the founders of the kvutzah refused to admit to an explicit plan indicates something about the nature of the plan, that wanted to refrain from being over-planned. Degania wanted to be cautious about fixing rigid frameworks that would prevent the people from living a creative, free and mutually responsible life. The plan of Degania was not fully formulated, but tried to be sensitive and cautious - and perhaps because of this it became a heavy burden for the members.

From the aspect of agricultural development, and helping to set up other kvutzot, it is possible to say that Degania, which guarded its independence with fanatic zeal, and was always introverted, was also at the centre of the planned regional activity.

Internally, although Degania was the creation of its founders, it was designed and moulded paradoxically by those who followed them. Many of the founders left; they went to found the first Moshav (Co-operative settlement), or turned to the town, or continued to wander. But those who remained were prepared to renew their form of life according to the aspirations of the youngest in the group, people from the Third Aliyah, and other groups which joined them. These followers gave Degania its recognized, more distinctive forms.

If the people of the Second Aliyah were individualists by nature, who searched for personal ways to build the land and the society, their followers came in organised groups and planted clearer organisational patterns, organised communal institutions, and a strong feeling of togetherness. These were the first to worry consciously about the continuation of the movement, so that Degania would not be transformed into a focal point for wistful

longings, or a model community, but a living place, which educates others to follow in its path. From this point, Degania can safely be accredited with the responsibility for the creation in the Jordan Valley of a republic of kibbutzim.

In the beginning, Degania was a work group of single people. The transition to family life was paved with many trials and tribulations. Today Degania is a very family-oriented society, of several generations. The children and grandchildren of the founders bear the central weight of responsibility.

The grandchildren and great-grandchildren are searching for their own way, which will be both a continuation and a spreading of their wings. This task seems virtually impossible - the valley has been planted, and watered, even industrialised. Perhaps here the question is needed: Can Degania be not only a project, but also the seed of a real culture? Can it be an expression of the continuation between and the uniqueness of the different generations?

Those who celebrate Degania's 100th anniversary may give us an answer.



Founders of Degania. Standing (from right to left): Chaim Tzadikov, Sarah Malkin, Tanchum Tanfilov, Yosef Baratz; Seated: Tzvi Yehuda, Yosef Elkind, Yosef Bussei, Yisrael Bloch, Miriam Baratz.

LIFE IN CHAVAT KINNERET

by Sarah MALKIN

Sarah Malkin was born in Russia in 1885 and settled in Palestine at the age of 20. One of the founders of Kibbutz Degania, she was engaged in child care work for some time and later was a nurse at the first hospital in Zikhron Yaakov for workers suffering from malaria. She died in 1949.

...We found an abandoned Arab hut on a hill opposite the lake where the sheik had kept his horse. The ruin was full of manure. Snakes and scorpions were its only inhabitants. Here we set up our kitchen and dining room. We slept on the flat roof of the hut without shade or cover of any kind. We brought water in jars from the Kinneret and food from Menachamia or Tiberias...

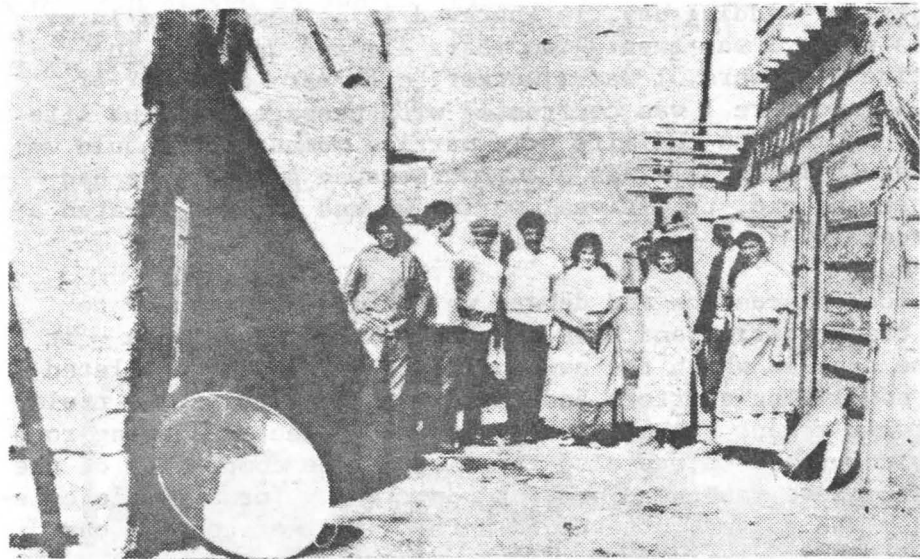
I woke up as the men were preparing to leave for work. I wanted to wait for them to leave so I could get dressed and start work myself. And then I heard them discussing me without knowing that I was awake and listening. "One of us will stay and work near the house. She won't be able to manage alone..." The words wounded me deeply. I need a guard? Someone to protect me! Indeed, I did not! I pretended to have just awoken and asked suddenly, "Why aren't you all leaving for work?" "Soon," they muttered in embarrassment. They eventually realized that I wouldn't accept any help and all left for the fields.

I started the housework. There was no oven and very few utensils. But I didn't mind because I was caught up in the enormity of my task and my responsibility. At night the chaverim would gather together and talk as if we were a small family. We talked about work and about our Arab neighbours. The feeling of brotherhood pervaded us all...

This life, so close to nature, made a new person of me. I gained new confidence in myself and my abilities. I went everywhere on my own, confident that I could handle any situation...

I cooked for thirty people, outside on stones. I had no shelter and no way to escape the burning sun or the pouring rain. The wood was damp and burned poorly, the rain penetrated the cooking pots... No one talked about building a kitchen. I didn't mention it either. We were just beginning, and the beginning is always hard...

I eventually set up my own private corner in a small shack that was used for storage of all the odds and ends. I slept with the mules' food, the laundry utensils, the snakes and rats. Here I set myself up. Often at night the rats would try to nibble at my toes. Sometimes the muleteer would forget to close the door after taking out some food and then I would suffer all night from the strong wind. This is how I would end a long day. But I didn't dream of demanding any better...



Um Juni in 1909. Miriam Baratz, Aharon and Yehudit Ostrovski, Rachel Slutzki, Yosef Bussel, Yitzchak Ben-Ya'akov. All the girls are bare foot, and the boys wear shoes.

THE FIRST WEDDING AT DEGANIA

by Miriam BARATZ

Miriam Baratz who came to Palestine on the Second Aliyah, was one of the original founders of Degania.

Twenty five years have passed since that day. Twenty five intensive years full of enthusiasm, hardships, doubts, and incessant struggle with the natural world and our own natures in the search for a new path and new mode of life.

We are, so to speak, enlightened people and no religious or metaphysical symbols have any value for us. But nevertheless...

That day, my wedding day, is engraved in my memory and in my soul as well. I was twenty-two years old and had been in Palestine six years. I was a worker, a farmer, a member of Degania. And here I was confronted with passage from the life of a young girl to the life of a married woman. How should we celebrate this day? It was a dilemma because although we had rejected the old, traditional world, we had not yet created a new order...

After much discussion and debate we decided unanimously to renew the tradition and have a "chupah". And in Degania - it was the days in which the new buildings were being completed - the new living quarters and the dining-room (this was truly a historic moment - the first permanent collective dining-room in the country). It was also the time of the completion of the harvest. There was, therefore, an opportunity for a triple celebration: the harvest, the house-warming and, of course, our wedding.

Our wedding was performed according to all the traditions with one innovation - instead of a cloth "chupah"* we used sheaves of wheat. I, as a bride, felt that day a need to sanctify myself and the occasion through work, by working, which is the core of our life, the basis of my personal revolution and that of all the young people in Palestine.

*) "chupah" - Jewish wedding canopy

The ceremony was scheduled for four in the afternoon. Degania sparkled and glowed as if she herself was a young bride. Everything was new and clean: the new building, the new dining room with its new tables and lanterns. The path from the dining room to the "chupah" and from the "chupah" to our new room was lined with flowers and greenery.

After the "chupah" we continued with song and dance until dawn. I stopped dancing only when I had to go to the 'refet'* for the night milking. When I returned from the 'refet' I found Dvorkin, one of the veterans, playing his violin while sitting on the porch of the first house in Degania. He was dazzling his tired audience with a piercing melody that so excited me I began dancing a solo. Everyone became so excited that they began to join me. Even those who had already retired opened their doors and slowly rejoined the celebration. Dawn, then early morning, and still we continued dancing, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder as Dvorkin played on and on. Finally it was time for breakfast. Our guests began leaving and we, the members of Degania, went out to work...

*) 'refet' - the dairy



THE FIRST CHILD AT DEGANIA

by *Miriam Baratz*

The first child was public property. Whoever wanted would bring him to the dining room even if it was ten o'clock at night. I didn't complain even when they woke him up to do so. More than once all thirty-five members of Degania would sit around the dining room together and play with my seven-month-old boy. The care given him was not exactly according to the latest theories of hygiene and education, but he was healthy and happy. If someone suddenly decided to stick his fingers into the baby's mouth the whole community would join the fun and enjoy the game. But we knew how to maintain a proper perspective on everything. Love for the child was one thing and my responsibilities at work were another. At that time, we were still being paid a monthly salary and I was given only two-thirds of the monthly sum since I had to devote time to the care of my son...

The boy grew. When he was two years old I became pregnant again. By that time there was already one other mother in the Kvutza. I was very pleased since that meant that the necessary preconditions for proper child-care could be established. But it was not easy. When the second child was born, I suggested that one of the two mothers should take responsibility for care of the children while the other continues to work. My idea was accepted but not for long. The other mother wanted to care only for her child, which left my son without any care since I absolutely refused to leave my work in the dairy.

The uncertainty and debate concerning child-care raised the question of the family in the kvutza. The question was discussed in the general meeting and the fear was raised that families would interfere with the development of the kvutza and harm the collective. Someone then suggested that there be no more marriages for the next five years. It is interesting to note that the first person to break the new rule was the man who had originally proposed it...

How naive we were then! We didn't yet understand that the family and children give meaning and strength to the life of the kvutza,

to the individual, to the group and mould its character. We came to this realisation as more and more children were born to the kvutza. Life became richer, more beautiful and more serious. The existence of children made everyone feel more responsible to each other as individuals and as a community...



*The first children of Degania.
Third from left - Gidon Baratz, the first child.
On far left is Moshe Dayan.*

Telegram on the Settlement of Um-Juni

sent by Arthur Ruppin

To the office of the Jewish National Fund, Cologne.

We have recently succeeded in forming a settlement group at Kinneret. Six of the most skillful and industrious workers in the Galil make up the group. We erected a shack at Um-Juni and gave them the necessary inventory and credit. They began work on December 1, and will cultivate approximately 1300 dunam.

The workers specifically requested that no publicity be given this first experiment in workers settlement in Palestine. We agree that nothing should be done which might arouse discussion or speculation in the press as to whether *this modest effort signals the beginning of a new era*. We therefore request that no public announcement be made about the existence of the workers settlement group. As soon as we have further details about the project and its success we will, of course, report to you.

In the meantime, please transfer to our account a sum of 12,000 Franks, in order to pass them as credit to the group. So far we have spent 3,000 Franks on the construction of the shack and an additional 4,500 Franks on the purchase of seed and other miscellaneous items.

Arthur Ruppin
Jaffa
December 9, 1909

The First Decision About Collective Education

Degania, Summer 1916

From an asepha (general meeting) of the kibbutz.

Yosef Bussel: "Care of the children is not just a maternal duty, but applies to all the women and girls in general, so that the mothers can participate in all the work with everyone. The main point is that the principle of co-operation must relate to everything, and nothing of a private nature must exist, as all privacy hinders our communal work. In collective life, all our expenditure must be shared by everyone, and we must not release a member from these expenditures simply because he has no children."

Devorah Dayan (mother of Moshe): "...Collective child-care is a possibility and even a necessity, but of course in an appropriate way. First, we must find a suitable person, as not everyone is capable of such responsibility - either from the women who are here or else we need to bring someone from another place. Secondly, we must limit the time; that is, how long should the mother care for her own child? In my view, at least for the first year, and only after that can the child be handed over to a governess. I suggest that we bring someone from the outside. First, she will be more dedicated in her work with children, as she will not want to work on the farm. Secondly, we have no-one here who is capable of such a task, mainly from lack of knowledge of the Hebrew language. So that we can afford to hire a governess, I propose that we fire Ben-Yehuda, the Hebrew teacher, and bring a governess instead."

The published diary of the Upper Betania group. This Hashomer Hatzair group spent a number of months on a mountain overlooking the Kinneret, during the early 1920's, before settling at Kibbutz Beit Alpha. Here we present a short segment of that diary.

Love - there is power here beyond comprehension. A redeeming power - the only power that can redeem the world and give beauty and clarity to life, that can create sublime harmony. Love - are we capable of it? Do we know how to love? Life will tell. We see how weak we are; we see how we surrender to daily routine.

I think that it isn't enough to dream optimistic dreams. We must also act to realize our dreams. We desire realization - the most direct, radical form of realization. But what do we see? We see the great difference between our dreams, our hopes, and the real world around us.

It's so simple and clear. Everyone should love his comrades with all their faults and weaknesses, because no one is absolutely pure or good. Man is sublime because he lives, exists, dreams and acts. Every man. Everyone should understand this, always and everywhere. We must remember: death is eternal. And from the moment of birth every moment is precious. We must take hold of our lives in order to make those moments precious. And how is that done if not through love?

When I was in Jaffa and saw the world outside of kibbutz, the world of the urban workers, their psychology, their values, I realized I was a stranger there. I felt that I belonged to a different world.

And then I imagined the world as one great ocean, deep and stormy. I saw people, everywhere, struggling to stay afloat in the storm. I saw many failing, drowning! And then I saw one large, rotting boat. And on its decks were rats - huge, fat rats - saving

themselves while all around men died. What a terrible dream! Then, I saw there, not far from me, a group of young people laughing, singing, loving one another and together seeking the material to build a new boat. How great is the difference between that nightmare and the island of new hopes! This dream taught me a lesson. I finally understood that we few youth can succeed in life only if we build a solid foundation first of all. A strong, firm, beautiful social foundation - something that will serve as an example to the whole world.

The cornerstone of the foundation will be love. Yes, I know there are problems with this. But this is my dream.

Of course I recognize the reality. I see the weakness in man. I know that primitive instincts often make a man forget things he shouldn't forget. I admit that I am a very weak person myself. I too surrender to my instincts. How I wish I could love all men. How often do I see someone and wish suddenly that I could go up to him and embrace him as a brother; but at the last moment I turn away. I flee from the embrace. Maybe it is because I see in the other the image of myself - all my weakness and ugliness and indifference and apathy. Everything I hate about myself I see in him. And so I flee; I run away. I want to be with him and love him and work with him and suffer with him. But I want him to be strong and beautiful. And I can't forgive him (forgive myself) for being otherwise!



DEGANIA AFTER 10 YEARS

Degania's designation - "mother of the Kvutzot" - reflected not only a chronological fact but also a historical truth; in the creation of the kvutza and the kibbutz one group - the Hedera commune - and one man - Yosef Bussel - played a decisive role.

It is therefore fitting to present Bussel's own summing up of the history of the kvutza, delivered some two months before his tragic death:

"In those days they used to laugh at us; the young people coming to work here. But we did not only want to work, we also wanted to create. When we came to Kinneret and expended sweat and blood, we were not yet satisfied. We created the kvutza and invested our souls and all our yearnings in it. We saw the colonies subsisting on the exploitation of others and we said: "we shall create a form of settlement which obliges us to work ourselves, not through others and not under the management of others." Thus the kvutza grew and served a number of aims: a) the conquest of labor - without masters and supervisors, a conquest combining the redemption of land and the redemption of labor; b) it offered an example by our labor; all around us work was being conducted in primitive fashion, turning civilized men into savages; the kvutza offered cultivated, modern labor; c) it enabled newcomers to adapt to arduous labor; d) the conquest of new places, a difficult task under the Turkish regime; e) finally- the crowning glory of the kvutza: it enabled us to become the arbiters of our own lives, to create a life of equality in the economic sense and equality between members of both sexes.

Now ten years have passed and what are the conclusions? As far as I am concerned, they are quite clear; we must continue to maintain this instrument, the kvutza, as long as the above-mentioned problems have not been solved. As long as we believe that in order to desire new life and aspire to it, it is not enough to uphold theories: they must be physically applied by ourselves; as long as there exist in our midst people who strive for the regeneration of our national and social life - the kvutza will be our cherished goal."

(Published in Hapoel Hatzair XII, 1919)

THE REBELS

by

Moshe BEILINSON

Moshe Beilinson was born in Russia, and was trained as a doctor. He arrived in Palestine in 1924, and joined the staff of "Davar", the daily newspaper of the labour movement, founded by Berl Katznelson.

This speech was delivered in 1929, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Second Aliyah.

...They left developed, cultured societies in the midst of a social revolution which promised a new world. They left centuries-old large Jewish communities with a rich web of community organisations. They abandoned their middle class lives and background. They abandoned those most precious of human treasures - the mother tongue and the culture of birth. They left all this without any collective framework or youth movement support, without public recognition or encouragement, without any certainty that anyone backed them at all. They left as individuals, isolated and despised by the masses. They left despite the indifference of the middle class, even that part which called itself "Zionist". They left despite the opposition of world figures, be they English lords or socialist leaders.

They left in confusion, in rebellion, almost in despair, without any assurance that they would not be the last pioneers as well as the first. They left sometimes without believing that all this made any difference; that someone would continue their rebellion. They left their country of birth to travel to their "homeland" - a homeland that existed only in their dreams. They came here to begin a new life, both materially and spiritually, in a language that they did not yet know. They came here to begin a life of physical labour, unused to it and unaware of

all it entailed. They came to a land whose inhabitants were strangers, much stranger than the Russian or Polish peasant; they came without any way to bridge that gap.

They came to a land ruled by an uncultured, rotten regime without any possibility of negotiation or communication. They came here to a small, backward Jewish community with a different set of values and different world view. They met here a few Zionist settlers who had lost any desire for independence, as if they had forgotten why they came here in the beginning. These settlers didn't accept the newcomers with joy, but were suspicious and sought to hinder their progress, if only from a lack of understanding of the newcomers' spirit and goals.

They came here as individuals - a few dozen, a few hundred - scattered across the land. They lived here year after year without joy, without celebration, in continual struggle with the new climate and unfamiliar conditions. They lived here in loneliness, with one eye always to the horizon, seeking a sign that some new boatload of pioneers was on its way to join them. But the boat never arrived.

They lived almost without hope that something would change, that the sacrifice was not in vain. They lived in the shadow of fear that the Zionist movement had reached a dead end. They saw a Zionist movement whose leader was dead, and whose untalented successors continued without belief and without vision.

And they came to live here in poverty, fighting disease, their lives continually in danger. They lived without any organisation, without organs of mutual aid, without cultural institutions or Kupat Cholim. They lived without moshavim, without kibbutzim, without any organised workers' settlements, without the idea of such a thing, in the beginning. Instead, they searched for a living as simple hired workers.

They did all this for years, and remained faithful to themselves and their values. And in the meantime they accomplished a miracle. They built the basis of a Jewish workers' society. They laid the foundation of a revived Hebrew culture, they created the kvutza, the kibbutz, a newspaper and a web of cooperative institutions. They did more than that. They created a new man - the Jewish worker, devoted, honest, resourceful; new kinds of relationships amongst men, between men and women, a new style of public life.

They created a community of proud Jewish workers who lived on their own labour, and who despise exploitation and greed.

All this required courage. The Jewish people has few other examples of such courage; the Zionist movement has none at all. The Jewish workers' society of today stands in gratitude and respect toward those few who rebelled against the reality of Jewish life and who understood the path upon which the Jewish people needed to embark.



S A C R I F I C E ?

by RACHEL (1929)

Rachel (Rachel Blowstein), the poet of the Second Aliyah, was born in Russia in 1890. Arriving in Palestine with her sister in 1909, she did agricultural work in Rehovot and at the girls' training farm in what is now Kvutzat Kinneret. It was in memory of those early pioneering days that she later composed her famous song 'Ve-Ulai' ("Perhaps"). In 1913 she went to Toulouse, France, to study agriculture. At the outbreak of World War I she was ordered out of France and had to return to her native Russia. In 1919 she was able to go back to Palestine, but poor health prevented her from resuming the farm work she loved and she taught in a Jerusalem school. She died in Tel-Aviv in 1931 and was buried at Kvutzat Kinneret. Her early writings were in Russian but after 1920 she began to write poetry in Hebrew. An anthology of her poems, 'Shirat Rachel' was published posthumously in 1939.

In this article she provides a rebuttal to Beilinson.

M. Beilinson's remarks about the Second Aliyah seem very strange to me. He paints a tragic picture of the heroic struggles of a few pioneers who sacrificed their lives on behalf of their homeland. But I see them differently. They didn't sacrifice themselves. They conquered a new world; they stood on a mountain peak, breathed the fresh clean air and saw the dawn of a new age.

But let me deal with the details. "*They left developed, cultured societies...*" They did not. They left the small, wretched village or town of their birth - a place of age-old poverty and despair that has nothing to do with "developed, cultured society." World literature is full of descriptions of such places and the youth who suffer and die there.

"They abandoned their middle class lives..." Such words would be understandable if spoken by a middle class Jew for whom his society encompasses all that is good and true in life. But from M. Beilinson? Why does he feel he must mourn a lifestyle that is opposed, in essence, to the Zionist dream? He himself thinks that that kind of life is monstrous - for what does he mourn?

"They left despite the opposition of world figures..." Moshe Beilinson does not know how little the chalutzim cared about world figures? They didn't care either because they were naive youngsters, or because they despised politics to a certain degree. But they didn't care.

"They left to a homeland that existed only in their dreams..." Doesn't M. Beilinson know that for youth a dream is very real if it has the power to push them to action?

"The came here to build a new life..." As if every youth (if he is really a youth) doesn't seek a new life? As if sleeping in a stable isn't much preferable to an easy, comfortable life for anyone who is really young?

"They came to a land whose inhabitants were strangers..." But there wasn't any reason to meet the inhabitants, and that didn't bother them as much as the lack of nationalist feeling amongst their own people.

"They lived year after year without joy and celebration..." To get up in the morning and set out, not for the school or the office, but to the fields, to that wonderful meeting with nature and the land- that isn't joy? To sow and to plant and to join God in the act of creation; to be together with other young people who dream and hope like you - that isn't joy? And to dance throughout the night and to ride bareback across the land and to hike each spring through the Galil - that is life without joy?

I agree with M. Beilinson's main point that it all took courage. But he sees their courage in their sacrifice of the good life on behalf of a new life here. I see their courage in their willingness to be true to themselves, in their audacity in doing so here in their reviving homeland.

Bibliography of English Material

- Books: Joseph Baratz - "Village on the Jordan"
Rachel Katznelson-Shazar, ed. - "The Ploughwoman"
Meyer Levin - "The Settlers"
- Play: Yehoshua Sobol - "Night of the Twentieth"
- Articles: Shdemot No. 2 - Muki Tzur - "The Intimate Kibbutz"
" " 7 - Muki Tzur - "The Uprooted"
" " 8 - Nora Levin - "First Kvutzot"
" " 9 - Muki Tzur - "Night of the Twentieth
- Introduction"
- Symposium - "Draining the Swamps"
" " 11 - Muki Tzur - "A Bridge in Both
Directions"
- Rafael Frankel - "Yosef Bussel, the Hadera Commune
and the Birth of the Kvutzah",
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University.

Extract from Natan Alterman's play 'Kinneret Kinneret'

Setting: Degania, 1912

Zerach: It's not good for me here, Eliezer. It's no good. I came here and I hoped I would start something new, lift a burden that has not yet been lifted, and place it on my shoulders - all of it, all its weight. To be a chalutz, Eliezer, yes... to be a giver, not one who accepts what is ready. And here I am, and everthing is already here (motion of desperation with his hand). It's better not to talk.

Eliezer: No Zerach! You mustn't do this. I've told you before more than once - be ashamed of yourself. Not every man is permitted to demand all the first illnesses, all the trials and tribulations. Even though you are worthy, I'm not denying that. But what can we do? First come, first served. And anyway, Zerach, not all is lost. Look here - all this deserted landscape, all the swamps, all the bare hills, all of it, as far as we can see, pouring with sulphur and rock and malarial fumes and jaundice and blight - isn't that enough for you?

Zerach: You don't understand, Eliezer. You can't see how you are living. You arrived and found a farmyard and hut, a mule and a cow, and a boiling broth ready on the stove. For them, for the first ones, who came here the winter before last, nobody gave them anything! But today, Eliezer, think of it, a chalutz comes to settle the land and receives - just think - a hut with a window, straw to sleep on, and a bench, and soon - I'm telling you - you'll have a special mat to put on the floor, just like a Maharajah! No, Eliezer. I have to run from this, to escape to a place where there is a little chalutziut left.

(Translated from the booklet *'Land of the Dream'* - 70 years of Degania)

